

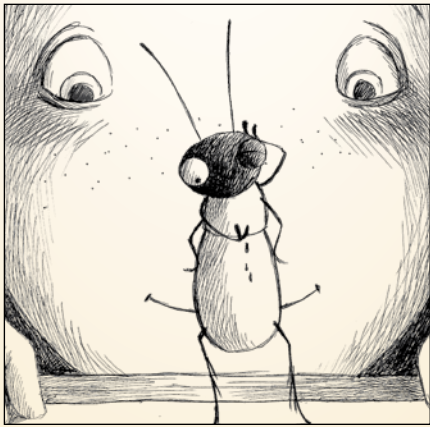
13. In the author's note, Elise Broach explains that though Albrecht Dürer was a real artist, his drawings of the four virtues in *Masterpiece* are fiction. Marvin creates pen-and-ink line drawings like Dürer did, and Kelly Murphy's illustrations in *Masterpiece* are line drawings. How are line drawings different from paintings? Use a pen or pencil to make your own line drawing. Consider drawing a scene, as Marvin did in his first drawing for James's birthday, or a representation of one of the virtues.

Small Worlds

14. How does the author make Marvin and his small world seem real?

15. How are the Pompadays and Marvin's family interdependent (knowingly or unknowingly)?

16. Think about what Marvin and his family need to live in James's apartment. If a family of beetles lived in your home, where would they live and why? Where would they have a picnic? What kind of crumbs would they find for their meals?

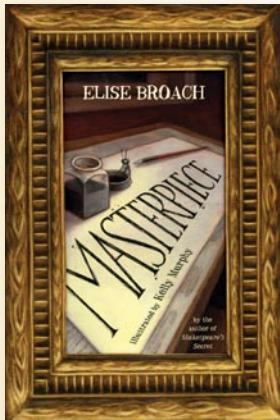


This guide was prepared by Emily Linsay, who is a teacher at Bank Street School for Children in New York City.

Elise Broach is the author of the popular novels *Shakespeare's Secret* and *Desert Crossing*. The idea for *Masterpiece* started when she lost a contact lens down the bathroom sink. She sat on the tile floor trying to get the pipe loose and fantasized about how wonderful it would be if a tiny creature could go fetch it. Elise holds undergraduate and graduate degrees in history from Yale University. She lives with her family in Easton, Connecticut.




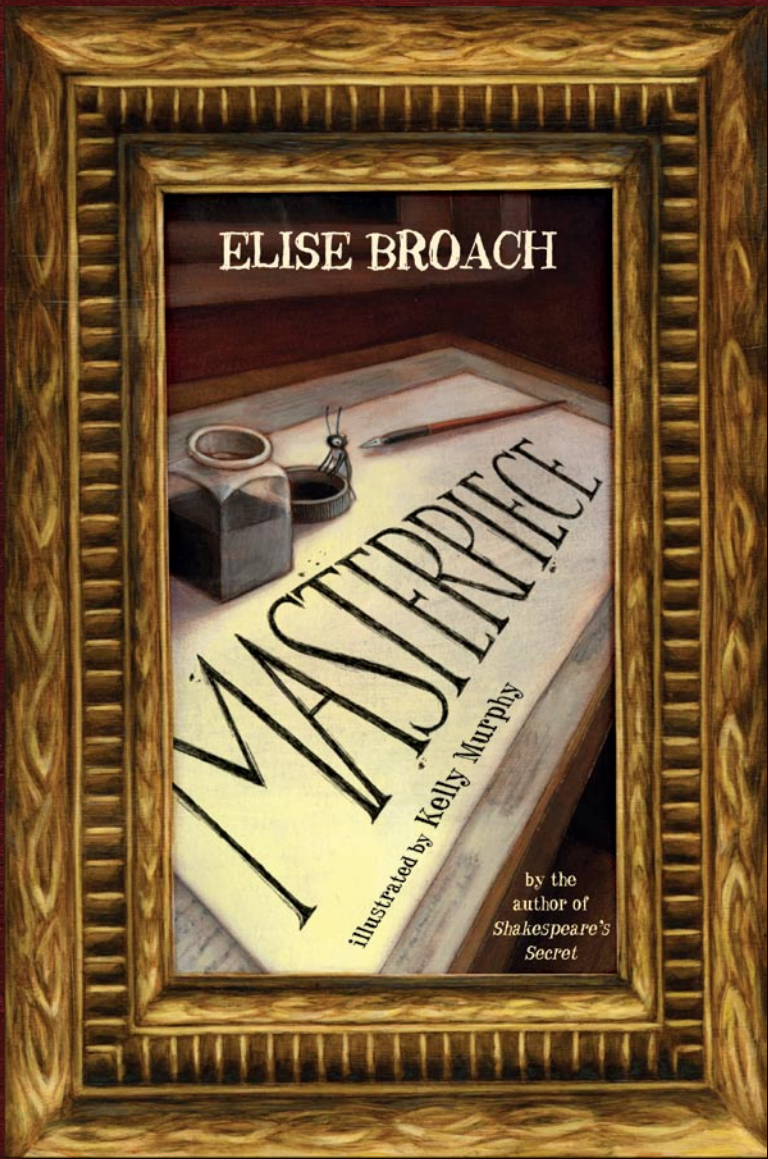
www.EliseBroach.com



Masterpiece What happens when a boy and a bug become friends? When the boy is eleven-year-old James and the bug is a beetle named Marvin, they solve an art museum heist! Elise Broach explores the themes of friendship, family, and values as she leads readers into an art mystery and the small world of a very clever beetle.

Masterpiece
By Elise Broach
Illustrated by Kelly Murphy
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Discussion Guide

Pre-reading Discussion

A boy and a beetle are unlikely friends. What do you think the qualities of a good friend are?

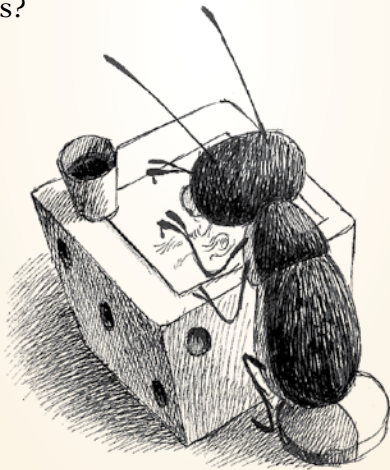
Discussion Questions

Friendship

1. Near the end of his adventure with James, Marvin reflects, “A great friendship is like a great work of art. It takes time and attention, and a spark of something that is impossible to describe. It is a happy, lucky accident; finding some kindred part of yourself in a total stranger” (page 287). What do you think about this idea? What do James and Marvin like about each other? How does their friendship grow even though they cannot speak with each other? Do you think they remain friends after this story?
2. Why do you think Elise Broach chose to make Marvin a beetle rather than a person or another kind of animal? What do you think she is saying about friendship by having a beetle and a boy become friends?
3. When Denny introduces James and his father to Christina, Denny says, “Come meet my friends” (page 63). When Christina sees James and his father visiting the museum after the Dürer drawings have been rescued, she greets them by saying, “My friends!” (page 273). Are Denny and Christina James’s friends? Why or why not? How do James’s relationships with Denny and Christina change over the course of the story? Considering what Denny did, is Denny friends with anyone? Explain.

Family

4. Compare and contrast James’s family and Marvin’s family. Which family would you rather live with? Why?
5. Marvin’s mother states, “. . . we expect a lot less than people do. If we get through the day without being stepped on, with a little food to fill our bellies, a safe place to bed down for the a few hours, and our family and friends close by—well, that’s a good day, isn’t it? In fact, a perfect day” (page 171). What do you think about her idea of a perfect day?
6. How does James feel about his parents’ divorce? Describe the relationships James has with his mother, his stepfather, and his father. Marvin thinks it’s good that James’s father likes Christina (page 287). What do you think about a second family for James?



Values

7. What is a virtue? What does each virtue featured in the story—fortitude, temperance, prudence, and justice—mean? Give an example of when a character displays one of these virtues in the story. Give an example of how someone might enact one of these virtues in everyday life. Which of the four virtues do you think is most important? Why?

8. James says that he made the drawing even though he didn’t. Why does he do this? Does this affect how you think about James? Did he have any other options? Do you think James caught his hand in the taxi trunk on purpose? What makes you think the way you do?

9. When Marvin overhears James agree to sell his drawing, Marvin thinks that people care only about money (page 165). Do you agree? Why or why not? Is money what James really cares about? What do you think matters most in life? What do you think matters most to James?

10. Denny offers that fortitude can be another word for bravery or courage (page 152). Which characters in this story do you think are brave? Why? Bravery can be more than taking a physical stand or risk. There’s also an intellectual bravery in standing up for what you believe or for what is right. What characters display an intellectual bravery? How?

Art

11. Karl says that a masterpiece is “the best of an artist’s work—one of a kind . . . It can be hard to say what makes one work stand out from the rest” (page 150). What makes something a masterpiece? Why are masterpieces valuable? Why do you think the book is titled *Masterpiece*?

12. What did you think when you learned that Denny was the thief? Why do you think he stole Dürer’s drawings? At the end of the story, James feels concerned about Denny having to go to jail. Marvin is not as forgiving. Do you think Denny should go to jail for stealing art? Why or why not?

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